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25 November 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The CIRL--A Review and Recommendations

1. This memorandum, prepared to provide a basis for IRAG discussion, reviews the purposes of the CURRENT INTELLIGENCE REPORTING LIST (CIRL) and the suitability of present procedures for production and review, of design, and of content for these purposes. A recommended program for the evolutionary improvement of the CIRL is contained in paragraphs 20-27. The memorandum takes account of the principal recommendations concerning the CIRL in the 1966 IG survey on requirements. The attached Annex is a draft of "General Guidelines for Contributors to the CIRL".

The Design of the CIRL

2. As the IG survey describes it, the CIRL is "... a collection of questions of current interest... for which answers are requested if a means already exists for acquiring them". The CIRL is produced in seven separate editions, each of which covers a different geographic area of the world and each of which is published three times a year to maintain its currency. Each edition is formatted on the basis of political, economic, scientific, and military areas of intelligence. All

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CIA production offices contribute to some editions of the CIRL and some offices contribute to all editions. All USIB agencies have been invited to participate; the Department of State has begun to do so on a selective basis, but DIA does not yet make any contributions.

3. Each of the seven area editions has unique characteristics which reflect the peculiarities of intelligence interest and modes of collection applied to that area. The concerns of each production office will vary greatly among each of the areas. Therefore, the CIRL as a whole can be discussed in terms of production schedules, format, etc., but substantive content must be discussed in terms of a specific area edition (i.e., USSR, Latin America, etc.).

The Value of the CIRL

4. Properly made up and used the CIRL is advantageous to the contributing production offices and to the collectors concerned with things that people say, write, do, and see.

- The well-managed contribution by a production office ought to reflect periodic reviews of both our knowledge of and flows of information on subjects within the responsibilities of the office.
- Collectors concerned primarily with the activities of people assert that the CIRLs, and especially

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the background statements in the CIRLs, are useful or more. [REDACTED] and some DCS personnel state that the CIRLs are essential in the direction of their efforts.

The Use of the CIRL

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5. The CIRLs are voluntary both as to producing and using organizations. The management of collection units, however, may assign authority to the CIRL. The producing units should recognize



ment makes directives from the voluntary CIRLs for operation of its collection facilities.

6. Occasionally, the management of other collection units similarly raises the role of the CIRL. There are examples of reporting which demonstrate that an Ambassador received the CIRL, assembled the "country team", assigned responsibility for the several questions on the country, and attempted to provide complete and concise answers.

7. The contributing analyst and the management of the contributing offices must recognize that the quality of the CIRL, especially the quality

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of the background statements and the specificity of the questions, is widely regarded by the collector as the key to the importance of the question and need for an answer. The quality and currency of the CIRL are also factors in the ability of and effort by the collector to provide answers, in the amount of excess information dumped into the intelligence collection system, and in the general efficiency of using collectors.

Uniformity Among the Issues of the CIRL

8. Each CIRL is different for different reasons. These include varying degrees of US interest in the area, the rates of change in phenomena in the area, accessibility of information in the area, the availability of US personnel to collect information in the area, the levels of staffing on the area in the production offices within CIA, and the varying managerially imposed effort on contributions to the various CIRLs. Recognizing these differences, uniformity among the CIRLs covering different areas is not desirable.

9. When one collector can be determined to be the pre-eminent user of the CIRL on an area, the needs and capabilities of that user should be pre-eminent in the minds of the officers drafting contributions.

STATSPEC [REDACTED] for example, is apparently pre-eminent among the users of the Soviet CIRL. DCS seems to use the Soviet issue less than other CIRLs. The US Mission in Moscow apparently makes little or no use of it. The

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Soviet CIRL, therefore, should be more oriented to the actual users, especially [REDACTED]. The tailoring of the CIRL to its use, of course, will take time. The precise users and uses of each issue must be identified. The contributors must then be informed of these identifications. The capabilities of each user of the CIRLs must be understood by the contributors to it. This research and educational process must, presumably, stay within existing staffing and funding limits.

The Quality of the CIRL

10. Variations in quality within and between the several issues of the CIRLs reflect, in large part, management on the division level. "Validation" of the CIRLs is not yet a serious process and has little real effect. That is, the difference in quality between a good and a bad contribution to a CIRL results from the instructions (or lack thereof) by division management on what to do in response to the IRS request for contributions, not from division level-reviews of contributions on their way from the analyst to IRS. This review, at best, can have a marginal effect. Some additions and rewriting can be demanded, and considerable excision can (but apparently does not now) occur. The basic form of the contribution, however, is already set when the division-level review is begun. Division-level management in the production offices must review its attitude towards the CIRL with this finding in mind.

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Responsibility for the CIRL

11. The IG survey on requirements made a strong case for assigning to OCI responsibility of overall reviews of each country listed in the CIRL and for preparing all of the background statements in the CIRL. The reviewers do not believe that this procedure is feasible. OCI personnel on each desk would have to acquire sufficient expertise on the economics, science, and military affairs of their country to be able to vet contributions on these subjects. The OCI desk would also be required to attain sufficient knowledge of these subjects to draft the summary statements on recent significant developments and on changes in the state of knowledge. OER, OSI, and OSR management and personnel would have to coordinate these statements and would have to accept OCI authority to decide what questions on what developments in the several non-OCI spheres warrant inclusion in the CIRLs.

12. IRS, with a much smaller staff, would face even more problems in attempting to vet substantively each contribution to the CIRL. IRS can, however, implement procedural rules established by the DDI and DDS&T; e.g., reject out-of-hand any question not accompanied by, and tied to, a background statement or drop any section not updated in accord with such rules. Therefore, each office should be responsible for the substantive content of its contributions, with IRS monitoring procedures and the validation process.

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The Alternatives to the CIRL

13. The alternative to the multi-purpose CIRL is clearly a set of lists of current information needs for each of the several collectors who now depend on the CIRL for a significant part of their guidance. This process would probably be more convenient for the collectors and would result in more coherent, consistent, and logical documents. It would, however, add new major burdens to those already carried by the production offices. These lists, moreover, would be duplicative. Most importantly, to make up several effective lists requires that the analyst know far more about the capacity of each of the several collectors than is probably feasible. Several lists would also put additional loads on IRS which presumably would have to review each list to assure that the proper questions for the proper collector are in the proper list and that they are drafted in a manner most useful to that collector. This is probably not an impossible task; it appears, however, to be a task requiring more effort than would be warranted by the resulting possible convenience for the collector or by possible increased efficiency of collection.

Marginal Use of the CIRL

14. Despite all of the above, the CIRL remains the best place to put a bad or marginal requirement. The CIRL does not demand collection, it does not cost a lot, and it does not involve risks. There is, consequently,

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room in the CIRL for marginal requirement, e.g., questions on the Bulgarian production of automobiles. The analyst assigned for whatever reason to a marginal responsibility must try to do his job as assigned. If he writes interesting and informative requirements for the CIRL, someone might forward a manual accidentally discovered, report a cocktail party conversation, or report a radio broadcast on the production of automobiles in Bulgaria.

15. If the requirements on automobile production in Bulgaria are not warranted, the fault lies neither with the requirement process nor the analyst, but rather with the managerial process that assigned an analyst to the topic. If this possibly misassigned analyst cannot put his requirements into the CIRL, he cannot put them anywhere. If, as a result of well-prepared CIRL contributions, he gets a response, it might have the beneficial effect of educating his peers and superiors to the usefulness of well-drafted current requirements. The validation process might, consequently, be utilized by division-level management for reviewing what its subordinates are doing.

Abuse of the CIRL

16. The review of the CIRLs suggests that they are used as protection against the possible post-mortem question, "What were your requirements?". Perhaps this is a desirable use but the present

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reviewers doubt it. This misuse results in the degradation of the CIRLs through a proliferation of questions for which answers are not really desired, expected, or possible. This misuse, insufficient understanding of the purpose of the CIRL, inadequate supervision of the task of producing CIRLs contributions, and inadequate attention to the validation of the CIRL tend to result in a "wish" book. The "wish" book lists all of the things that an analyst would like to know in the best of all worlds.

17. Some DDP personnel consider that the CIRL is in part responsible for the information explosion. To the degree that the considerations listed above govern production of the CIRL, DDP appears to be correct and division-level management to be at fault. Of the problems with the CIRLs, those caused by inadequate attention on the part of division-level management would seem to be most amenable to quick solution.

Priorities Within the CIRL

18. The 1966 IG survey on requirements recommended that the DDI and the DDS&T see that each issue of the CIRL carry a preface identifying the most important information needs in that issue. On the whole, the current reviewers doubt the validity of the suggestion. The chief fault is that such a list would be irrelevant for the principal uses and users of the seven issues of the CIRL. (It would be most relevant to the Soviet issues and to the Chinese part of the Far East issue, but

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for these areas the CIRL is primarily of value to [REDACTED] and DCS who mostly STATSPEC process existing sources for whatever they may contain. Even in these areas, consequently, a priority list is of uncertain relevance.) The lack of relevance stems in part from the nature of the CIRL--covering existing collection facilities and existing sources--and in part from the multitude of areas covered. The individual country coverage (six pages on Japan, four pages on Guatemala, one-half page on Malta) presents no real difficulty on priorities to the users of that portion of the CIRL.

19. Desired improvements in the background statements, moreover, should at least in part fulfill the intent of the IG-suggested priority list. The statement, by putting the questions into a context, should make the collector increasingly aware of the relative importance of the question to the security of these United States.

A Program to Improve the CIRL

20. Publication of the CIRL must continue on an uninterrupted schedule. A program to improve the CIRL must recognize this need and must, also, take account of the factors that should cause significant differences among the issues covering different geographic regions. For these reasons, a program to improve the CIRL must proceed slowly and piecemeal.

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21. As a first step in the remedial program, IRAG shall review, discuss, and modify this memorandum and its Annex, draft "General Guidelines for Contributors to the CIRL". After IRAG agrees on this memorandum and its Annex, the Annex shall be published. It shall be required reading for all contributors to the CIRL and for supervisory personnel in offices that contribute to the CIRL. The Annex shall be the initial criteria for the IRS post-publication reviews of the several issues of the CIRL, discussed below.

22. IRAG shall discuss a series of possible prohibitions on the content of the CIRL. IRAG shall also discuss assignment of responsibility for enforcement of the accepted prohibitions. (IRS will accept whatever is validated, or can assist the DDI and the DDS&T in enforcing the prohibitions. IRS will explicitly discuss implementation of IRAG-imposed prohibitions in post-publication reviews.) The following prohibitions are recommended:

- a. Questions without explanatory background statements;
- b. Basic questions (see paragraph 27 below);
- c. Third iteration of a background statement;
- d. Third iteration of a question.


23. IRS should begin a post-publication review of each CIRL issue. The review would compare the contributions to the CIRL with the General

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Guidelines and the prohibitions. User participation in the review should be solicited. The review would be intended to allow the DDI and the DDS&T and production office directors to check on division-level management's fulfillment of its responsibilities. As additional criteria are developed for each geographic issue of the CIRL, these criteria should be added to the base against which IRS makes its post-publication review.

24. The remedial process should be a continuing effort. In addition to the post-publication review, IRS should, beginning with the Soviet issue, review each issue of the CIRL with the objective of providing detailed guidelines for the contributors in order to shape the issue to the needs of the collectors who use it most. A statement of the needs of

STATSPEC  in the Soviet issue of the CIRL is being solicited from appropriate bureaus and a similar statement will be solicited in DCS.

25. When revision of the Soviet CIRL is under way, IRS should start a similar review of the use and the users of the Western Europe issue of the CIRL in order to establish similar guidelines to increase the relevance of the issue to its users.

26. In time, all CIRL issues should be similarly examined in terms of the relevance of the CIRL to the specific users, their sources, their limitations, and their reporting capacities. All CIRLs should increasingly reflect the differences in the respective areas of coverage. In the longer

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run, this process should be repeated when changes in collection capabilities, US interest in an area, or other factors suggest a need to review the guidelines for the CIRL covering a given geographic area.

27. These on-going reviews may suggest that the CIRLs are now covering information needs that should be expressed in standing requirements for basic information; e.g., "Report all information on OB", or "Continue reporting on all economic agreements with the Soviet Union".

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In such event, IRS and the contributing offices should review and correct deficiencies in the standing requirements. The review, to date, suggests that [REDACTED] may especially need updated standing requirements on economic, military, and scientific affairs.

Attachment
Annex

Distribution:

- 1 - ADDI (Mr. Proctor)
- 1 - ADDS&T (Mr. Lauderdale)
- 1 - DD/FMSAC (Mr. Brandwein)
- 1 - DD/OSI [REDACTED]
- 1 - DDP Representative [REDACTED]
- 1 - DD/OER [REDACTED]
- 1 - DD/OCI [REDACTED]
- 1 - DD/OSR [REDACTED]
- 1 - DD/OBG [REDACTED]
- 1 - DD/DCS [REDACTED]
- 1 - DD/[REDACTED]
- 1 - Secretary/IRAG [REDACTED]
- 1 - IRAG File/IRS
- 1 - IRAG File/ADDI
- 1 - ADDI Chrono

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SUBJECT: General Guidelines for Contributors to the CIRL

1. A clear understanding of the uses which collectors make of the CIRL is essential to the operation of an effective CIRL Program. The users of the CIRL are collectors whose targets are things that people see, do, say, or write. The process of answering the questions in the CIRL involves a mixture of monitoring radio broadcasts, translating overt documents, reporting conversations (mostly overt), and in a significantly lesser degree, reporting observations (mostly overt). Contributions to the CIRL should reflect these conditions.

2. The CIRL is essentially a voluntary program both for contributors and for collectors of intelligence information. It does not demand action. Most collectors use it as interest, opportunity, and existing sources permit. CIRL questions do not cause new collection operations. A question in the CIRL is not a formal requirement in the sense that a collector must accept responsibilities for procuring the listed information and take steps to develop sources for it.

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3. While all human resource collector agencies may utilize the CIRL for a variety of purposes and to various degrees, only [REDACTED] and STATSPEC DCS have officially incorporated it into their guidance programs.

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various collectors, [REDACTED] makes perhaps the greatest use of the CIRL for guidance of its collection, selection, processing, and reporting.

b. DCS uses the CIRL to familiarize its field collectors with the current information needs and interests of intelligence production elements. In addition, the CIRL is used by DCS collectors to test the potential of its sources, to support a collection effort until more specific guidance can be obtained, or to guide a collection effort for which other requirements are not available. These efforts result in a substantial volume of reporting specifically referencing the CIRL.

4. Although adequate knowledge is lacking for definitive judgments on how the various components of US Embassies utilize the CIRL, we do

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know that the kind and the amount of use made by each component in each Embassy varies greatly. Occasionally a "country team" provides concise and complete answers to every question in the CIRL. At the other end of the range of use, some Embassy components fail even to circulate the CIRL. Both examples are extreme. This variation is in large measure a function of the quality of the CIRL. We do know that Embassy users emphasize the value of questions within the capabilities of existing assets and the value of background statements. Reviews of the use of the CIRL suggest that little effort or interest is engendered by broad questions, baldly stated, without background and without any indication of the specific information that is key to current problems.

5. This review underscores the need for careful consideration by the contributor of the items submitted for inclusion in the CIRL. The better the document, the more likely it will be productively used. The paragraphs which follow present some positive and negative guidelines for contributors to the CIRL.

6. The CIRL should aim for information for which there is a reasonable expectation of availability to existing collectors during the normal pursuit of their duties in dealing with existing sources. The best CIRL contributions are those which suggest to the collector specific points that he has missed in his normal reporting or which express specifics which analysts would like emphasized or amplified to a greater degree in such reporting.

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7. The CIRL should list SPECIFIC information needs. It should concentrate on those aspects of events or phenomena which constitute gaps in our information. With rare exceptions, it should not express "category" needs in general terms (e.g., report order of battle), nor should it emphasize "continuing needs" of a general nature (e.g., continue reporting on all economic agreements with the USSR).

8. The CIRL should list CURRENT information needs. In general, it should concentrate on events or phenomena that have occurred, or are expected to occur, within a period of six months or so on either side of the publication deadline. It should point toward acquisition of information that has a reasonable possibility of contributing to finished intelligence within six months or so of publication.

9. Contributors to the CIRL should emphasize the statement of background and of the state of knowledge. Questions should always be based on these background statements and should have some relation to the demonstrated capability of at least one of the human source collectors. Because the CIRL must serve its several users and because only a few are specialists in the subjects in question, background statements and questions for the CIRL are most useful when the meaning is clear to the non-specialized user.

10. Finally, because the CIRL is for a specific purpose--to stimulate reporting from mostly overt collectors so that they can be

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responsive to current information needs--contributions should not be designed to reflect other objectives, some of which are presented below:

- a. The CIRL is not a substitute for standing requirements.
- b. The CIRL does not replace, and should not duplicate, PNIOs, requirements for collection by sensors of any type, indications lists, alert lists, collection guides, observations guides, or the IPC List (consolidated requirements for covert collection).
- c. The CIRL is not a "wish book", i.e., a list of all that an analyst would like to know in the best of all possible worlds. (In the 1966 IG survey on requirements, one issue of the Soviet CIRL was called "a letter to Santa Claus".)
- d. The CIRL is most emphatically not an encyclopedic statement of essential elements of information needed on a specific area or country.
- e. The CIRL is not a medium for listing "protective requirements" intended to transfer blame for poor analyses from analyst to collector, especially in the advent of a post-mortem.

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f. The CIRL is not a device by which requirements for additional collection can substitute for adequate research and analysis of available data.

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